

Sego Lily's Going—Clear Out of State

Utah's state flower, the sego lily, is fast disappearing from the landscape of the state that honored it.

Dr. Seville Flowers, professor of botany, University of Utah, Wednesday explained why the delicate little flower, whose bulbous roots helped sustain the pioneers in times of need, soon may be only a memory to older inhabitants of the state.

The sego lily, actually a mariposa lily, comes in the classification of xerophytic plants—those that thrive only in areas of limited water supply.

The favored growing places are the dry bench lands around the valleys of northern Utah, and these are fast being taken over as building sites for homes. At one time sego lilies grew in profusion on Salt Lake City's

north and east benches. These are now practically covered with homes.



Sego lilies will not grow in gardens or other places which are watered regularly. Like other plants of this type, the bulbs from which they grow must have a resting period in relatively dry soil after the early summer blooming, Dr. Flowers explained.

HE SAID IT is now becoming difficult to find enough of them for study by botany students. There still are some in parts of Davis County, but even these may soon give way to subdivisions creeping up the hillsides.

Several years ago, at the request of groups who could foresee the eventual extinction of the state flower, the university professor dug up nearly 4,000 sego lily bulbs and planted them in a special

area on the U. campus with the idea of perpetuating them for future generations.

BUT U. GARDENERS made the mistake of allowing sprinklers to play over the area. The next year only 14 of the 4,000 bulbs gave rise to flowers that pushed feebly through the soil.

Dr. Flowers said one possibility of perpetuating the sego lily is to plant some of the few remaining bulbs on dry hillsides.

THE WORD SEGO is an Indian name for lily, and was given to the plant by Utah pioneers.

It was made the official state flower after Utah became a state in 1896. The flower was accorded this recognition not only because of its beauty, but also be-

cause the bulbs had served as an emergency food supply for the pioneers.



BEFORE THE STATE was settled, Brigham Young studied reports of early explorers to determine what native flora could be used as food in case of need. He found that sego lily bulbs had been used by the Indians, who either stored them in pits for winter consumption or dried them and ground them into a sort of flour.

Sego lilies grow in parts of Idaho, Wyoming and Oregon, as well as northern Utah. Dr. Flowers said they are not found south of Marysvale.

Another type of lily, called camas, also was a staple of Indian diet, but is now practically extinct in Utah. While the sego lily is white, the camas is pale blue and in color.

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